

# ONE Memorandum

Khrushchev, Castro, and Latin America

4 June 1963

**This page is intentionally left blank.**

APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: FEB 2008

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

4 June 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to DD/I (Policy Support)  
SUBJECT: Khrushchev, Castro, and Latin America

SUMMARY

We do not believe that the accord reached between Khrushchev and Castro presages imminent, horrendous developments in Latin America. We do believe, however, that the two leaders have worked a tentative agreement on strategy and tactics for promoting Communism in Latin America where the Castroite and regular Communist movements have been competing rather than cooperating with each other. Castro seems to have taken heed of Soviet urgings that, for the immediate future, he soft-pedal his more extreme revolutionary efforts and join in a policy of gradualism and caution -- at least until more favorable opportunities present themselves. Castro has officially been welcomed to a position of special stature in the international Communist movement, and a

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

start has been made toward repairing relations between him and other Communist party leaders in Latin America. Khrushchev and Castro probably plan a flexible approach which would give Castroist revolutionary tactics precedence in certain Latin American countries, while, in others, Castro would be expected to back more moderate national-front programs of the old-line party leaders.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. The Khrushchev-Castro communique, signed on 23 May at the conclusion of the formal part of Fidel's visit, suggests that the two leaders have reached a considerable degree of accord on strategy and tactics for promoting communism in Central and South America. Their agreement -- even if it does not hold up completely in practice -- will probably still provide for a significant step beyond the previous relationship of contempt and competition between the Fidelistas and the regular Communist leaders in the area.

2. The communique stresses the need for patience, caution, and peaceful means to socialist revolution. On the other hand,

- 2 -

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

it cites Castro as the revolutionary example for Latin America and records a favorite thesis of his on the key revolutionary role of the peasantry. These indications that Khrushchev and Castro managed to work out a compromise are confirmed to some extent by the fact that Castro met, during his visit, with two regular Latin American Communist leaders, from Uruguay and Bolivia.

3. With respect to the immediate future, it appears that the Soviets have been concentrating on persuading Castro to tone down his more extreme efforts to export revolution. They have undoubtedly pointed out to him that such activist moves at this stage of the game run the risk of inviting US invasion. There is reason to believe that Castro has agreed for the time being to be cautious. For example, Havana radio's revolutionary propaganda and the speeches of Cuban leaders have been relatively muted for some weeks. Earlier this year Havana radio had gradually dropped the series of special broadcasts of inflammatory propaganda which it had been beaming to Guatemala, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. Although there is a continuation of the routine radio propaganda encouraging violence and rebellion in Latin America, the volume of such broadcasts has markedly decreased and the tone of Cuban radio/TV commentaries has become

- 3 -

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

significantly milder. Fidel, however, is likely to revert to form when he thinks the US heat is off or when he thinks he sees a clearly favorable opportunity to trigger a revolution in one of the Latin American countries. With respect to this latter contingency, the Soviets may exert a further moderating effect, for they are likely to be a great deal more objective than Castro -- or his revolutionary theoretician Che Guevara -- in deciding whether a given situation contains the "objective conditions" for revolution.

4. As things now stand in Latin America, there seems to be no immediate opening for a Castro-Communist revolutionary try. While many of the governments are far from stable, the potent opposition groups are nationalist reformist or conservative military in character. Thus the Castro-Communist elements presumably stand to gain the most from tactics which will not pay off quickly -- tactics designed in the specific case to create conditions for moves to wrest power, not from the existing regime, but from its probable successor.

5. Venezuela, where Castro sympathizers have perhaps a stronger toe-hold than in any of the other states, may present an early test case for the new Khrushchev-Castro approach.

- 4 -

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

While the activist program of terror and sabotage has neither succeeded nor promises to succeed in bringing down the Betancourt government, the activists include individuals over whom neither Castro nor the Communist Party (PCV) have control. Although the strident appeals by the Castro propaganda machine for revolutionary action in Venezuela have been toned down, it will be difficult for Castro to shift to coexistence with Betancourt.

6. Over the longer term, it would seem that the Soviets and Castro could profit best from a joint, flexible program. In some countries where the regular Communist party is legal, well-entrenched and a member of a national front, such as Chile, or although illegal has established itself in labor and student organizations and has access to the top levels of government, such as Brazil, the soundest tactic might be to act carefully, to build further assets and to prepare for participation in coalition governments. Here the pace would be slow, the regular party organization would have the lead role and Castro would be expected to support it -- or, at least, to refrain from competing with it.

- 5 -

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

7. In other countries, however, (for example, Venezuela and Guatemala) this pattern would be reversed. In certain cases, the establishment of a Castroite activist-resistance movement in the hills, even though not able to overthrow the regime, might provoke government changes and repression which would improve revolutionary chances for the future. In other cases, the drawing power of the Castroites may be much broader than the drawing power of regular Communist party leaders; here the possibility would arise of revolution by a leftist coalition dominated by Castroites. The Soviets, under such circumstances, would be expected to shunt aside the regular party leaders, and perhaps to displace them, in order to direct effective clandestine backing to the Fidelistas. This line of action presumably would not bother Khrushchev and company if they were reasonably sure they were backing a potential winner. Certainly, the Soviet leaders in the past have supported many a non-Communist nationalist revolutionary leader at the expense of a local Communist party. (e.g. Nasser, Qasim) And in the case of Fidel, they can have confidence that any Castroist revolution will eventually be shared with them.

- 6 -

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~



~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

8. The possibility remains, of course, that the accord between Castro and Khrushchev on Latin America will not survive early attempts to implement it. Certainly there has been suspicion between Castro and other Communist leaders in the area; moreover, some of the practical steps which would have to be taken might be irreversible for one side or the other. There is, moreover, the problem of Castro's own ego, mercurial temperament and revolutionary inclination. He is likely to find it much easier to jump in than to stay out of an exploitable situation.

Ramsey Forbush

- 7 -

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

**This page is intentionally left blank.**